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ABSTRACT

In a discussion of the attempts of the organized workers' photography movement in Weimar Germany to redirect the use of photographs in everyday life, this paper analyzes photographs published in the "Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung," (AIZ) a large and successful picture magazine that emphasized a left-wing, humanitarian approach. The paper points out that Willi Munzenberg, the founder of AIZ, and those who worked with him stressed the social function of photography, defined the camera as a weapon in the class struggle, and saw the worker-photographer as the eye and the conscience of the proletariat. The paper also notes that, in contrast to the bourgeois press, the AIZ and similar publications stressed the subjectivity of photography and encouraged workers to recreate and share their social and political environments through the publication of their photographs. In analyzing the photographs, the paper concentrates on the style of worker/photographers, with particular attention to family, documentary, and journalistic photographs. (Author/FL)

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"WHO PHOTOGRAPHS US?"

The Workers' Photography Movement in Weimar Germany

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"WHO PHOTOGRAPHS US?"

The Workers' Photography Movement in Weimar Germany

You must all come before my camera:
Honourable gentlemen with close-cropped hair,
Veterans of student duels,
You must all come before my camera:
Ladies in automobiles,
I want to take aim at your high breasts,
You must all come before my camera:
I capture you with my flashlight,
All you champagne-drinking parasites,
And I want the rest before my camera too:
The hospital with its suffering and distress,
The screams of women in childbirth,
And then the final picture in my camera:
Flags of victory all over the world,
And human beings holding one another's hand.

(Max Dortu, Come Before my Camera, c. 1930)

I

The New Realism, the Bauhaus movement, and the beginnings of photo-journalism in the Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung are major chapters in the history of modern photography. Another equally important contribution to the development of photography was made by the organized workers' photography movement in Germany.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and define the attempts to redirect the use of photographs in everyday life through an analysis of work published in the Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ). By confronting established conventions of photography, the photographers created politically relevant and socially powerful statements about contemporary conditions in society. The search for reality and the struggle for objectivity which were the essence of the New Realism in Germany also provide a backdrop for the

emergence of a new type of photography. Thus, cultural and political environments helped formulate a new way of seeing and recognizing typical processes of social life; photography under these conditions captured a reality that was defined by a shared ideology and the subjective experience of goals and interests common to the proletariat.

Central to the worker-photographer movement was the growing recognition that photography could play a crucial role in confronting the images engendered by the bourgeois press. First, we will consider how the German Left incorporated photography into its political ideology, then established organizations and publications to express this ideology. This is followed by a discussion of the major outlets for the proletarian photographer's work, based upon an examination of the ways photography was used in AIZ. Finally, we turn to the question of the worker-photographers' style, how it emerged and was distinct from several other types of photography of the period.

II

Since its beginnings the press has functioned as an efficient and effective device for the dissemination of ideas. For political parties, newspapers have functioned as outlets for propaganda and as means of agitation. With the rise of photography and the popularity of picture magazines, the use of the photograph constituted a new tool, perhaps more powerful than written communication, for those political and economic interests in search of potential followers or consumers. Thus, while commercial interests began to exploit the photographic image as an advertising medium, political groups recognized photography's potential as a device for organizing individuals politically and for combatting the opposition's image. The efforts of Alfred Hugenberg to establish a mass media empire embracing

large newspapers, publishing houses and the UFA film company were highly successful for the cause of a reactionary, right-wing faction of the German National Party that became the "voice of the counterrevolution" (Gay, 1970, p. 133).

At the other end of the political spectrum, Willi MÜnzenberg was equally successful in creating a propaganda machine for liberating the victims of the capitalist system. MÜnzenberg's vision of using pictorial material for propaganda purposes clearly was not confined to a single publication. He talked about pictures for a range of contexts, "to popularize the leader of the Communist International, to destroy the halo effect surrounding bourgeois leaders and military generals," and he wanted to see pictures used as a means of education and agitation concerning Soviet Russia (MÜnzenberg, 1925, p. 51). In particular, the growth of amateur groups--and particularly workers' photography clubs--the increasing popularity of photography in the press and magazines, the accessibility of photographic equipment, and the Communist Party's search for a more effective means of organizing the proletariat, helped create those social and political conditions that led to the establishment of publications like the Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (1921) and Der Arbeiter-Fotograf (1926), and organizations like the Vereinigung der Arbeiter-Fotografen Deutschlands (VdAFD), and the picture agency, Unionfoto G.m.b.H.

The premises for the establishment of a workers' photography movement were that the bourgeois world and the reality of proletarian life were separate realms of experience, that bourgeois photography was incapable of capturing the essence of proletarian existence, and that workers, increasingly influenced by the aestheticism of the bourgeois, were alienated from proletarian ideologies. Thus, photography became not merely a new way of

seeing a record of one's real environment, but also a weapon in the class struggle.

To be a worker-photographer mean to admit openly the subjectivity of one's approach, to overcome the traditional, bourgeois influence upon the practices of viewing (and taking) pictures, and to use the camera quite consciously as a weapon. The social function of the photograph emerges as a central concern along with the demand for a better understanding of the photograph as an instrument for change. The worker-photographer was considered "the eye" of the proletariat, whose major task was to teach others how to use their eyes in ways which helped them discover their daily environments. The relationship between photograph and ideology became critical. The "ideology of objectivity" dominating the uses of photography in the bourgeois press is confronted by the connotations expressed through the explicitly subjective grounding of the photograph in the context of the leftist press. The ways photographs are made, and, equally important to "closing" the message, their display in combination with text, can signal the formation of an alternative ideological theme (Hall, 1973, pp. 185-89). "The most essential aspect is this: how much is a photograph worth when looked at in connection with the great idea of socialism. . . (pictures of dismal social conditions alone are worthless: even a 'beautiful' photograph can work for us, if it captures only a moment from which we may gather strength, description and understanding). . . ."(Beiler, 1967, p. 43).

A lengthy quote from Willi Münzenberg's discussion of the tasks of the worker-photographer clarifies the importance he attached to the use of photography in the class struggle. He observed that

> Thirty or forty years ago, the bourgeoisie already understood that a photograph affects the onlooker

> in a very special way. If a book contains pictures it is easier to read and more likely to be bought, and an illustrated magazine is more entertaining than a leading article in a political daily. Photography works upon the human eye; what is seen is reflected in the brain without the need for complicated thought. In this way the bourgeoisie takes advantage of the mental indolence of the masses and does good business as well, since the illustrated papers often achieve a circulation of millions.
>
> Not only that, however - much more important is the ultimate political effect produced by a combination of several pictures, with their captions and accompanying texts. That is the decisive point. In this way a skilful editor can reverse the significance of any photograph and influence a reader who lacks political sophistication in any direction he chooses.
>
> The revolutionary workers of all countries must clearly understand these facts. They must fight the class enemy with every weapon and defeat him on all fronts. . . (P)roletarian amateur photographers must learn to master the camera and use it properly in the service of the international class struggle. (Münzenberg, 1931, p. 51).

In the past, the milieu of working class people had been sympathetically depicted by artists like Käthe Kollwitz, George Grosz, Hans Baluschek, Otto Nagel, Heinrich Zille and others. Now, individuals were encouraged to use their cameras in an effort to discover and expose social and political corruption. Bourgeois photography, with its emphasis on technique and its concentration on neutral subjects and personal statements, was generally recognized, but rejected, in favor of placing workers and their working or living environment at the center of photographic activities. The camera became a means of expressing a partisan, ideologically charged point of view. It has been argued that the workers' photography has provided photography with a new subject matter and a new type of subjectivity (Beiler, 1967, p. 14), because the working class demanded of its photographers an approach which depicted the typical activities of individuals as social beings. This type

of photography reached beyond the social criticism of earlier photographers, because it communicated societal conditions, established social and political relationships, agitated, and moved opinions. Thus it provided a broader context than typical pictures of social conditions taken by bourgeois photographers.

The task of the worker-photographer has been stated similarly in Der Arbeiter-Fotograf:

> "We must proclaim proletarian reality in all its disgusting ugliness, with its indictment of society and its demand for revenge. We will have no veils, no retouching, no aestheticism; we must present things as they are, in a hard, merciless light. We must take photographs wherever proletarian life is at its hardest and the bourgeoisie at its most corrupt; and we shall increase the fighting power of our class in so far as our pictures show class consciousness, mass consciousness, discipline, solidarity, a spirit of aggression and revenge." (Hoernle, 1930, p. 49).

III

The establishment of the Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung was an attempt to provide a forum for a new organization, the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (the Workers' International Relief, or IAH). This organization provided the reason and the material for MÜnzenberg's propaganda campaigns; it had formed in 1921 as an outcome of his famine-relief work in Russia and quickly developed into a large-scale organization which emphasized the humanitarian nature of its activities and attracted an impressive number of intellectuals who contributed to various publications, including the AIZ, to theatre performances and film productions. Besides AIZ with a circulation approaching half a million, there were other publications like Der Eulenspiegel, a humor magazine, Berlin am Morgen, a daily newspaper, Welt am Abend, an evening daily, which appealed to mass audiences with combined circulation figures of

over 400,000 (Gruber, 1966, p. 288). Through these and other means of publications, Münzenberg wanted to create a general feeling of solidarity among proletarians around the world. His success toward the end of the Weimar period was based upon his use of unorthodox methods to attract large audiences, the publication of the AIZ serving as the best example. Münzenberg recognized the potential of photographs to overcome barriers among workers:

> The picture has an effect particularly on children and young people, on those with simple thoughts and feelings, on not yet organized, indifferent masses of workers, farm laborers, tenant farmers and other classes. . . . Even considering just the distribution, it is easier to sell an illustrated magazine to an indifferent worker than a theoretical brochure. It must be possible to successfully counteract Verdummung through bourgeois illustrated magazines which are circulated in the millions in Germany with an illustrated workers' magazine. (Münzenberg, 1925, p. 57).

It was Münzenberg's idea, then, to establish a picture magazine that would reach beyond the immediate goals of the communist movement to propagate a type of revolutionary socialism. In this attempt he tried to reach a compromise among his idea of propaganda and the interests of the Communist Party in a wide dissemination of its political programme, the needs of the working class for entertainment, and the interests and talents of the worker-correspondents and photographers (Ricke, 1974, p. 69). The result was a new form of worker-journalism as a counter movement to the bourgeois press. Münzenberg wanted to challenge the bourgeois journalism of his day, to alert workers and farm laborers to the dangers of a manipulated press system, and to sensitize them to their class needs. He rejected the narrow definition of a party press and incorporated into his publication those aspects of daily experiences that were important to workers and their

families; thus entertainment, sports, and a host of non-political subjects became part of his strategy to attract readers.

In addition, Münzenberg attempted to remove the distinction between producer and consumer in the traditional press system by encouraging active participation through contributions by writers and photographers. Consequently, the AIZ relied on the output from worker-photographers. (They were identified at first by name, later, in order to protect their safety, by reference to them as "Arbeiterfotograf" only). In its writing and in its appeals for support the AIZ frequently referred to the shared interests and goals of all workers, and identified itself as a magazine that belonged to all members of the proletariat.

The AIZ, then, was the most successful attempt during the years of the Weimar Republic to politicize a large segment of the German population; its agitation was aimed first at reading habits and secondarily encouraged direct action and immediate response to the abuses of the capitalist system. Through the experience of looking at photographs and photomontages, the readers could see the reality of their own lives, the inequality of the political system, and, not least, could feel the potential power of shared experiences that could lead to conscious political acts.

In 1926, the AIZ organized a photo contest and soon afterwards, workers organized nationally in the Vereinigung der Arbeiter-Fotografen Deutschland (VdAFD). Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, first published in August 1926, was to be a collective organizer of worker-photographers, a teacher of technical skills, an educator of class consciousness, a mentor of artistic questions, and an agitator of worker-photographers until it ceased publication in 1933 (Beiler, 1976, p. 35). German workers' photography was a form of militant amateur photography that rejected any retreat into a private sphere, but

sought a variety of public outlets and organized itself locally as well as on the national level. The first national conference at the VdAFD in Erfurt (17 April 1927) was attended by representatives from 25 groups in Germany and five representatives from foreign countries (USSR, CSR, Great Britain and Belgium). Other groups were formed later (16 alone between October and December 1927), exhibitions were organized and pictures were contributed to newspapers and magazines published by labor unions, the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party. One of the largest local groups, in Leipzig, reported sending about 150 photo series to various publications over a two-year period (Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, 1928, p. 15). Two years later, at the second national conference in Dresden, 24 organizations with 1,480 members were represented, and Der Arbeiter-Fotograf reported a circulation of 7,000.

The German worker-photographers cooperated closely with their Soviet counterparts. The result was the foundation of Unionfoto G.m.b.H. in 1930 (later called Union-Bild) by German and Soviet interests, including Russ-Foto, the largest picture agency of the USSR, the secretariat of the Allrussian Workers' Photography Clubs, and several Soviet publishing houses. Workers' photography groups were also formed in several European countries and the United States (Danner, 1967, p. 22). There were courses in workers' photography offered at the Marxist workers' schools in Berlin and Leipzig, and by 1932 each issue of the AIZ carried one or more photo stories contributed by workers; there still were no staff photographers.

With the Nazi takeover, most of the activities of these organized groups came to an end, although Der Reporter, an underground publication of worker-photographers continued until November 1933.

By the end of the 1920s, the use of photography for gathering evidence

against unjust and oppressive activities by the state and right-wing political organizations had become widely accepted among workers. There were numerous exhibitions, and locally maintained bulletin boards displayed the latest photographs of ongoing activities. Under the leadership of the AIZ and Der Arbeiter-Fotograf photographs were widely distributed, documenting the increasingly intolerable situation in Weimar Germany.

IV

Stuart Hall argues that a photograph is "a truncated version" of a cultural code. Within the press, "formal news values" serve as the code that translates societal events and themes into photographic representations intelligible as "news" to news practitioners and their audience alike. How these shared news values are treated or "angled," that is, the interpretive coding they receive, introduces ideological themes that anchor the photographs' connotative value (Hall, 1973, p. 177). Within the bourgeois press, the double articulation of formal news values and ideological treatment binds the inner discourse of the newspaper to the dominant ideological universe of the society. This universe rests on consensus knowledge that is for the most part nontransparent to those who share it.

For publications that are self-consciously attempting to construct an alternative ideology, the formal news values are inflected differently. While the same events and themes may be present, the particular treatment they receive is designed to build an alternative world view. Any efforts in this regard are, at the outset, more transparent, as are the ideological themes they express. To those not predisposed towards this alternative ideology, photographs in non-bourgeois publications are seen only as interesting, albeit challenging, variants on familiar themes.

This distinction provides a way of understanding how the AIZ could at the same time be a vehicle for mobilizing the proletariat and serve as a referent for other publications, particularly the bourgeois press of the period. Stefan Lorant, editor of the Münchner Illustrierte Presse, has said that he and his counterparts on other publications frequently pulled the latest issue of the AIZ out of their desk drawers to get ideas for fresh ways of presenting photographs. Regular features in the AIZ included pages of photographs from a variety of picture services to present recent events occurring in other parts of the world. In keeping with its attempt to create an international appeal, AIZ's feature "Aus aller Welt" captioned these photographs in Esperanto. A page devoted to photographs of workers engaged in athletic activities was another regular feature.

AIZ exerted its strongest influence on other publications, however, in its use of photomontage. A multitude of images, both hand-drawn and photographic, were combined into a single pictorial representation to make a specific political point. John Heartfield was the master of this technique, linking particular events to their political and social consequences in montages that remain unequalled in their graphic emotional power. His work appeared regularly on the cover of the AIZ and in the center double-page of the magazine, where it was clearly designed for poster display.

Aspects of photomontage also appeared in the layout of series of photographs; backgrounds were often dropped out and multiple images were frequently morticed into and laid over each other on pages incorporating as many as ten or twelve single photographs. Even on these heavily worked pages, the photo essay began to emerge as a distinct form--a cohesive series combining photographs and text on a single topic that relied on a balanced display to guide the viewer's eye across the page. Policemen's guns were

pointed into adjacent photographs of demonstrating workers; construction workers strode into photographs of the new factories they were building; photographs of women holding up their hungry children were laid over scenes of mass demonstrations.

In these early photographic series, the vision of the worker-photographers first found expression. Overt political struggle was only one of the topics they covered. The routine of daily work, home life and living conditions of the proletariat, sport activities and the tenor of worker's leisure time were the other general subjects that workers photographed. By selected specific aspects of their individual lives to document, these photographers provided the AIZ with a range of subjects that conveyed visually the subjective experience of a broad segment of their social class. The authentic quality of this camera record overrode the uneven technique and heavy-handed display, linking the AIZ to its intended audience as no other publication of the period did.

V

From the social phenomenon of applying photography to common experiences, the style of the worker-photographers emerged as a shared view of the world. The social organization within the worker-photographer groups in Germany, and their reliance on Der Arbeiter-Fotograf as a common source of guidance and inspiration provided the context in which individual workers, given cameras, found a coherent style that characterized their photography. In the sense that style can be defined as "the coordinated pattern of interrelations of individual expression or executions in the same medium," the work of these photographers can be analyzed as highly interrelated and coordinated (Kroeber, 1970, p. 123).

Discussions of style frequently begin with an analysis of overt content or subject matter. Yet the limitations of content as a determinant of style are apparent when the photography in the AIZ is compared with that in other publications in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s. The topics of daily life of common people, the institutions that shaped those lives, the prevalence of sport, and the turmoil of political struggle and change dominate the photography published in the German mass media during this period (Ohrn, 1979). But it is the way these subjects are inflected, that is, the subjective perspective seen in the content and form of the photograph, and the way this perspective is anchored in layout and text, that distinguishes this body of work in the AIZ from its counterpart in other magazines.

Having considered the way photographs were displayed in AIZ, and recognizing that overt content cannot serve as a distinguishing element of style, let us turn to the other ingredients that characterize the emergent style of the worker-photographer movement. Two ingredients remain: the subjective content, or what Kroeber calls "the single 'concept' of the subject, along with its emotional aura and value toning," and--closely related and equally important--the specific technical form of execution, that is, technique (Kroeber, 1970, pp. 121-22).

Within the pages of Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, workers found information on and analysis of photography that addressed both of these ingredients of their evolving style. In articles about the art of photography, they could read about and see examples of the work of other photographers. A sensitivity to patterns of light and shade in everyday objects, for example, as seen in the photography of those working at the center of the New Realist movement, was discussed. Examples of Soviet photography were frequently published, introducing the German photographers to the perspectives of other socialists

working in their medium. Other articles focused on philosophical discussions of the relationship between art and labor, and the problem of integrating artistic expression with political struggle. stimulating workers to develop new concepts of the subjects they photographed.

"How to" articles in Der Arbeiter-Fotograf considered specific photographic techniques that amateurs might not be familiar with. Inexpensive alternative approaches to photographic problems received particular attention. Photographers could learn how to make certain items of equipment that might not otherwise be available to them. Each issue also included a feature titled "Bilderkritik," offering specific criticism of work which individual photographers had sent in to the publication. The ready availability of a magazine considering the many facets of photographic work undoubtedly contributed significantly to the patterns of expression that characterize the work of the proletarian photographers.

Their emergent style incorporates aspects of several different approaches to photography. First, it is apparent that they were working as many amateurs do, and their photography shows strong similarities with what has been called the "home mode" style (Chalfen, 1975). The frequency of group photographs, usually arranged in a symmetrical composition, has a corollary in the many photographs of groups seen in family collections since the turn of the century when amateurs began recording family life (Ohrn, 1977). The effect of overt posing is seen, as people stare stiffly at the camera or smile with raised fists in apparent response to the photographer's request. The photographs tend to define the scene broadly; the loose framing and placement of the primary subject or group at its center conforms to the amateur's definition of subject and background. The commonsense shared

assumption that showing "the whole scene" means framing the principal subject with even amounts of space top and bottom, left and right, is evident.

The inflection that these formal stylistic features receive in the proletarian photographers' work differs from that of the photographer anchored in the "home mode" tradition, however. The wide view, symmetrically composed, is well suited to representing large crowds in the streets and rows of workers taking a break to pose for a photograph. It emphasizes repetition of the human form and the settings in which the subjects are found, and thus suggests a political and social interpretation by the photographer. In contrast to the "personification" of events in the bourgeois press (Hall, 1973, p. 183), the theme is not one of individuals, but of a mass--even "the masses"--of people engaged in a coordinated activity. The context of that activity, whether it be in the streets or in the work place, defines their role, while the size of the group suggests their power to define the setting as their own, one in which they, as a group, assert control.

The evident posing of photographs in which people are gazing at the camera expresses a theme central to the amateur family photograph collection--that of agreement between the subject and the photographer. Agreeing to stand and be photographed is an admission of the power of the photographer over the subject, and may result when the quality of the photographer's authority is coercive, as seen in the extreme example of identification photographs in police files. However, when the photographer's authority stems from his or her role as an accepted member of a group, the sense in which the individual or group agrees to be photographed, if not strictly egalitarian, is certainly cooperative. The resulting photograph, as in the case of many of the worker-photographer group shots, expresses the

photographer/subject relationship as one of shared, positive understandings of the purpose for which the photograph is being made.

In other respects, the style of the worker-photographers more closely paralleled another approach, seen most clearly in photographs made as part of extended documentary projects. Working environments and working conditions were approached as integral parts of a person's life and not as separate experiences often denied importance by bourgeois photography. Thus, a worker photographing his wife, for example, did not employ the conventions used by the family photographer, but recorded her daily routine. The theme of "a day in the life of a worker" showed up frequently in the pages of AIZ, indicating a more analytical vision than that characterisitic of the amateur. Photographing the step-by-step process of a particular job was another common topic. The camera work employed in the analysis of these subjects was straightforward--camera angle rarely deviated from normal eye level, and the distance between photographer and subject tended to be held constant.

This recognition of the activities of the poor and working class was self-avowedly propagandistic, an intention that also has parallels in other documentary movements. As Dorothea Lange later said about her work for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in America during the 1930's, "Everything is propaganda for what you believe in, actually, isn't it?. . . The harder and more deeply you believe in anything, the more in a sense you're a propagandist." (Lange, 1968, p. 181). The German worker-photographer would have agreed. A correspondence between the FSA photography in particular and the worker-photographer in Germany is freely acknowledged (Hiepe, 1978, p. 18-19). The importance of selecting and photographing previously undocumented groups and individuals was an explicit purpose of the FSA project, and several

of the photographers, most notably Russell Lee, chose the analytical step-by-step approach to record their activities. Lewis Hine's documentation for the Pittsburgh Survey and the National Child Labor Committee in the early twentieth century also parallels the approach used by the German photographers. Each of these documentations departed from the common tendencies to select better-known leaders of society and usually avoided artful camera technique. The political implications of this approach are clear: they showed the living and working conditions of the lower echelon of society and at the same time drew attention to that society's dependence on the activities of the working class. However, the overt political style of the German worker-photographer was further heightened by their identification with their subjects. Their first-hand experience with the people and activities they photographed gave them more intimate access to these subjects. The authority of their photographs thus conveyed the authenticity of a participant's perspective.

In other respects the worker-photographers were working as photojournalists and their work shared components of a style that was evolving in the German picture magazines of the period. Although their photography was not always tied to a specific "newsworthy" event in the conventional sense, they were avid in their coverage of street demonstrations, and saw themselves as "watchdogs" in the frequent confrontations between workers and the police. When documenting the ongoing activities of workers, they often looked for a specific "angle," usually a particular worker or family, and tried to photograph as if through the eyes of their subject. By selecting a single individual as a protagonist, they could "tell a story" that represented the experiences of a broad segment of society, using an approach closely parallel

to the photojournalists'. Particularly when making a series of photographs, they began to employ a variety of camera angles and distances from their subjects, looking for details, action, close-ups of faces, and overviews of the scene.

The "Bilderkritik" feature in Der Arbeiter-Fotograf encouraged this approach. Photographs submitted by workers were cropped to show a tighter focus on an individual figure, and new frames were drawn on overview photographs to demonstrate other aspects of the scene that deserved closer attention. By explicating these rules of effective composition, "Bilderkritik" was helping photographers shape their work to the photo essay form. Ways of improving their work in this regard were also a common topic of discussion within the worker-photographer groups.

The success of this kind of instruction can be seen within a parallel group working in Detroit in the early 1950s. When Robert Drew was assigned to Life magazine's newly-formed bureau in that city, he organized several factory workers interested in pursuing careers in photojournalism. By helping them develop an ability to locate good stories and teaching them the "formula" for shooting photo essays, he increased significantly the coverage from Detroit in Life (Dykhouse, 1979).

The photo essays by German worker-photographers that were published in the AIZ did not look like Life's photo essays, however. The protagonist of of a story was often worked into a photomontage. A cut-out photograph of this person might be displayed over other photographs of the work place. In a photo essay on child labor in a yo-yo factory, for example, the largest photograph on the page is of a single unidentified child. This technique resulted, not in the elevation of the individual as seen in Life a decade

later, but in establishing the person as a symbol of the workers who shared his or her experience. Life editor Wilson Hicks stated that the good magazine photographer "...is most interested in finding drama in everyday life, in singling out the commonplace, in delving into human problems; unlike the documentarian, he is not interested in doing so only for the purpose of social criticism or to plead a cause" (Hicks, 1952, p. 88). Clearly, the intentions of the German worker-photographers' contrasted sharply with Hicks' ideal. Despite the photojournalistic conventions they used to level a radical critique against capitalist repression, a goal achieved in part through the way their work was displayed in the AIZ.

VI

The expressions of the worker-photographers can thus be seen as fusing aspects of three styles--that of the amateur family photographer, the documentarian, and the magazine photojournalist. It was the worker-photographers' identification with their subjects that linked components of these separate styles and at the same time distinguished their work from that of others during that period. Their photographs grew out of an active participation in the events they photographed, and this perspective created parallel identification with their intended audience. The class-conscious readers could thus see events as if through their own eyes, with the added political inflection intended to enhance their awareness of the oppression they experienced in common with the people in the photographs and the men and women who created them. Through its photography, the AIZ became their publication, truly "a medium of the masses," providing visual proof that the bourgeois press was misrepresenting the events they were experiencing first-hand. The witness-like power of the camera in the hands of worker-

photographers became the power of a hundred, even a thousand cameras (Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, 1929, p. 128), contributing to the formation of a common world view among workers and thereby giving them a base from which to effect radical political change.

Their "final picture" did not show "flags of victory all over the world," however. After 1933, the revolutionary efforts of those sharing a proletarian world view were quickly suppressed by a totalitarian regime whose rise was not only based upon economic fears and political impotence among opposition parties, but also relied upon violence as a form of propaganda. The brutal impact of the Nazi regime was far ranging and, eventually well-known. One of its immediate effects was the destruction of the worker-photography movement in Germany and the dispersion of photography expressing proletarian concerns.

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